

Film Review: 'Future June'

Brazilian docmaker Maria Augusta Ramos' superb new film traces the varying economic plights of four Sao Paulo residents.

By [Guy Lodge](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF RIO FILM FESTIVAL

Cast: Andre Perfeito, Anderson Dos Anjos, Alex Cientista, Alex Fernandes. (Portuguese dialogue)

Official Site: <http://www.maria-ramos.com/futuro-junho/>

A rigorous sociology lesson without one iota of teacherly rhetoric, Maria Augusta Ramos' superb new documentary "Future June" instead counts on penetrating powers of perception to lay bare the economic imbalances ailing contemporary Brazil. After taking on the addled Brazilian justice system in her three previous features, Ramos once more holds national institutions — including the police and transport systems — tacitly to account as she highlights the country's flailing infrastructure in the run-up to hosting 2014's soccer World Cup. But it's the film's rich personal focus, tracing the daily travails of four Sao Paulo workers across a range of classes and pay grades, that elevates "Future June" to the uppermost tier of recent financial-crisis docs.

Ramos' five previous features have made her an acclaimed fixture on the nonfiction festival circuit; following its world premiere at the Rio fest, her sixth will undoubtedly impress doc programmers across the globe. International distribution, however, has largely eluded her work thus far, and "Future June" hardly ducks the commercial challenges of passive perspective and intensive local focus. Still, the pic could gain added exposure

ahead of Rio de Janeiro's hosting of next year's Summer Olympic Games, with the World Cup-aggravated politics raised here still pertinent as the country readies for another international close-up. "If you don't serve the people, there will be no World Cup," a crowd chants during one documented protest; the tournament may have gone ahead, but Ramos' quietly bristling film is loath to suggest that the people's problems have been solved.

As in her past work, the helmer's technique is wholly observational, with the film free of interviews, narration or other editorializing input. Rather, a discreetly but astutely placed camera captures telling physical and conversational interactions in the private sphere, while offering viewers a long view of fractious public activity: Scenes of heated mass demonstrations and disorder are all the more powerful for the absence of verbal reportage. Even shorn of political context, "Future June" would offer audiences a rare, representative look at the heaving metropolis of Sao Paulo in everyday motion — beginning with an immersive aerial sweep over its densely tower-spiked skyline, before zeroing in on its street-level conflicts.

Gradually, Ramos' four human subjects are introduced going about their daily business. Andre Perfeito is a wealthy financial analyst, skeptical about the country's "self-sabotaging" economic policies even as his own life remains comparatively unaffected; feeling the pinch at the other end of the scale are car factory laborer Anderson Dos Anjos and motorcycle courier Alex Cientista, the latter struggling to support his wife and young epileptic son. Taking a more proactive approach to his financial difficulties — and getting grimly burned in the process — is subway worker Alex Fernandes, who becomes a vocal leader in his union's strike for fairer wages, called mere weeks ahead of the World Cup kickoff.

In observing the differing levels of awareness and emergency in the lives of these unrelated men, the pic keenly draws attention to a population-wide sense of disillusionment with government regime, without resorting to banal, hectoring dualities. The pragmatically-minded Perfeito is no more demonized for his privilege than Fernandes is sanctified for his righteousness. Nonetheless, Ramos and editor Karen Akerman have a devastating way with a cut: The sharp contrast between Cientista's cramped family kitchen and the amber-and-onyx surrounds of a restaurant where Perfeito goes on a dinner date negates the need for direct social commentary. Elsewhere, Cientista and his friends ruefully bemoan the fact that World Cup tickets have been priced out of their reach; later, Perfeito's nonchalant attendance of a match puts a silent period on their point.

While there's a chilling urgency to much of Ramos' footage — notably scenes of aggressive police action on protesters that, in light of recent news events, will resonate far beyond Brazilian borders — there's ample room for sidelong humor too. At one point, Cientista and his wife discuss purchasing a funeral plan with a saleswoman who gormlessly promises "an offer [they] can't refuse": a drawer in a communal vault for a monthly payment equivalent to their mortgage. As in much of the best documentary filmmaking, it's hard to believe such vignettes aren't scripted.

Meanwhile, Ramos refuses to use raw reality as an alibi for sloppy aesthetics. Whether headily following the courier's bike through Sao Paulo's notoriously congested streets or standing coolly back from the madding crowd, Camila Freitas and Lucas Barbi's deep-toned lensing is carefully composed throughout, yet spontaneously sensitive to background activity in the subjects' home and work environments.

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Reviewed at Rio Film Festival (Premiere Brasil Competition), Oct. 4, 2015. (Also in Yamagata Documentary Festival — competing.) Running time: 100 MIN. (Original title: "Futuro Junho")

PRODUCTION: (Documentary — Brazil-The Netherlands) A Nofoco Filmes, Selfmade Films, VPRO production. Produced by Maria Augusta Ramos, Niek Koppen, Jan De Ruiter.

CREW: Directed, written by Maria Augusta Ramos. Camera (color), Camila Freitas, Lucas Barbi; editor, Karen Akerman; sound, Gabi Cunha, Ricardo Zollner; supervising sound editor, Edson Secco; re-recording mixer, Secco.

WITH: Andre Perfeito, Anderson Dos Anjos, Alex Cientista, Alex Fernandes. (Portuguese dialogue)



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